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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BELGRADE 000569

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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [UNSC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [SR](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SERBIA WEEKLY UPDATE (4/23-4/27)

REFS: A) BELGRADE 565 B) BELGRADE 533 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by A/POLCOUNS Ian Campbell, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (U) This cable summarizes notable events relating to Serbia and Kosovo.

SUMMARY

12. (C) The focus for the week was three-fold: the dominant story was the run-up to and the aftermath of the Security Council Mission (SCM) to Belgrade April 26 (with follow-on travel to Kosovo). The visit, according to US PermRep Ambassador Khalilzad, would not sway the opinions of Council members. Simultaneously, media covered a demonstration by 8-12,000 Serb IDP's on the administrative boundary line (ABL) between Serbia and Kosovo timed and organized by the GoS to coincide with the SCM visit - highlighting a growing theme in Belgrade that returns must be a particular focus of any Kosovo settlement. Meanwhile, earlier in the week, media focused on the intentions of Slovakia with regard to the UNSC process, culminating in Tadic's visit there April 24-25. End summary.

SCM VISIT

13. (c) The April 26 Security Council Mission (SCM) to Belgrade (reported ref a) produced little new substance on the Kosovo status issue, but was spun by PM Kostunica as an endorsement of the re-start of negotiations. The GoS passed to SCM members its "new proposal" for an alternative solution to the status issue, which was nothing more than a re-hash of Serbian autonomy proposals dating back more than a year. A few of the more unprepared SCM members, notably the South African PermRep, made unhelpful statements about alternative solutions and disparaging Ahtisaari, but the summary press statement by the Belgian PermRep hit all the right marks, emphasizing that the process would continue to be focused in New York. Ambassador Khalilzad believes the likely impact on hearts and minds in the UNSC from this trip will be negligible.

14. (c) In addition to the outcomes reported ref a, the UN office in Belgrade offered the following additional items at a debrief of the visit April 27: they emphasized that the overall objective of the GoS appeared very clearly to be to interject the "new" Serbian proposal into the UNSC process as a viable alternative to the Ahtisaari plan. Despite the repeated assurances of the Belgian PermRep at his press conference following the meetings that the UNSC was going back to New York to debate the Ahtisaari plan only (using this trip to inform the debate), the local UN office surmised that a casual observer might conclude that the GoS had been successful - judging primarily by the public expression of support for consideration of the Belgrade proposal given by the South African PermRep at the meeting.

15. (c) In other meeting notes, the UN office highlighted the fact that the Chinese PermRep, following the South African comments,

steered the discussion back on track by noting to Tadic briefings they had received in Brussels casting the status process as a choice between controlled and uncontrolled independence. From the meeting with parliamentarians, the UN office noted that democratic opposition party LDP had remained surprisingly quiet, allowing Vojvodina MP (and former LDP coalition partner) Nenad Canak to carry forward the dissenting view. Similarly, the UN office clarified that SRS leader Toma Nikolic had been uncharacteristically reserved, and that it was Socialist leader Ivica Dacic who had been the most vitriolic - e.g., comparing Kosovo Serbs to Jews in Nazi Germany.

IDP RALLY

16. (sbu) Organizers had hoped to draw 10,000 IDP's from Kosovo to the administrative boundary (ABL) crossing point of Rudnica for a two-day demonstration, April 26-27, timed to convey to the SCM. SCM leader Ambassador Verbeke, however, announced during his press conference that the mission would not be able to visit the rally because of "logistical problem" and lack of time. As of April 27, the demonstration was peaceful - government officials (including the Commissioner for Refugees, Dragisa Dabetic, and CCK VP Nenad Popovic) told us previously they had driven home the message that violence will work against the interest of the IDPs and the Government of Serbia. Buses, trains, and private vehicles transported the IDPs from Serbia and Montenegro to the boundary crossing, where IDPs displaced within Kosovo joined them from the other side of the ABL. A little-known and little active umbrella association of IDP associations (The Association of Displaced Persons and Exiles) was the nominal organizer of the event, with active support and contributions from the Serbian National Council. Behind the scenes, though, extensive GoS support and financing was apparent. We learned from a local NGO contact, for instance, that Dabetic tasked his Commissariat municipal representatives throughout Serbia to promote

BELGRADE 00000569 002 OF 003

the demonstration and to organize the bus transportation. Popovic, who told us that the government is supporting but not financing the event, provided interviews about the demonstration to broadcast and print media. Popovic has publicly described the demonstration as a signal of great interest and the beginning of massive returns to Kosovo.

GOS ACTIVITIES

17. (sbu) Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government Zoran Loncar said April 22 that a new negotiating process on Kosovo-Metohija should primarily solve the issue of the return of the Serbs exiled from the province. PM Kostunica echoed this on April 23, saying the Serbian government now places the greatest emphasis on the issue of mass and immediate return of 200,000 exiled Serbs, and that the UN mission has to answer this issue. The PM repeated this claim, as did President Tadic, as a main theme of meetings with the SCM.

18. (sbu) Fonmin Draskovic met with representatives of the French Foreign Ministry April 26 saying that Serbia is willing to negotiate directly with Pristina and compromised based on the technical aspects of the Ahtisaari plan but not the part that alters Serbia's status and borders. In the April 26 issue of Le Figaro, Draskovic criticized France, the US and UK for denying Serbs in Bosnia the right to self determination, but supporting it in the case of Kosovo Albanians.

REPORTED USG STATEMENTS

19. (sbu) Belgrade media reported the Ambassador's statement of April 20 at the conference on 125 years of US-Serbia Diplomatic Relations that the U.S. is determined that the UNSC should adopt a resolution which would open the door to Kosovo gaining supervised independence, and it will work on this with all the members of UNSC, including Russia. A similar view was expressed by UK Ambassador Wordsworth when he told Vecernje Novosti that a controlled independence was better than an uncontrolled one, which could lead to chaos.

¶10. (sbu) Belgrade press quoted DAS DiCarlo's statement from a meeting in Skopje April 23 that the US wants the status of Kosovo resolved this spring and opposes delays. She also stated that the U.S. supports Ahtisaari in finding a solution for Kosovo, and that the resolution of the Kosovo issue would contribute to the integration of the region into EU and NATO. Local media reported that Macedonian PM Gruesvcki told her Macedonia backed Ahtisaari's proposal.

¶11. (sbu) B92 reported April 25 comments by the Ambassador that Serbian IDPs have the right to return to their homes in Kosovo and that normal life for them has to be secured. However, the Ambassador stressed that the U.S. does not support new negotiations, and that it will work with the CG and the UNSC on new resolution and by summer Kosovo will get supervised independence.

OTHER DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES

¶12. (sbu) At the April 23 EU foreign ministerial session in Luxembourg, Slovakia requested that Kosovo status should be the result of a UNSC resolution, and that this EU position should be entered in the political statement issued by the EU-US Summit on April 30 in Washington. Belgrade daily Politika, citing the Slovak media, reported April 24 that Washington is now counting on having secured the 9 votes needed to adopt a resolution which would open the road towards for Kosovo. This reporting received little attention. In his April 24 meeting with President Tadic, Slovakian President Ivan Gasparovic said Slovakia understood Serbia's efforts to protect its sovereignty in Kosovo and it backed an initiative that would prevent any solution on Kosovo from being reached outside of the UNSC. He said he supported the Slovakian FonMin's initiative to compel the EU and US to find a solution for Kosovo through the UNSC.

¶13. (sbu) Russian FonMin Lavrov said on April 23 after meeting with the EU Troika that the implementation of UNSCR 1244 is necessary for the resolution of Kosovo status as it would enable the continuation of negotiations. He denied that Russia was preparing its own version of a UN Resolution on Kosovo, though there was press speculation that the elements of such a resolution had been drafted.

¶14. (sbu) All Belgrade electronic media reported Russian Deputy FonMin Titov's comments to journalists in Moscow April 24 that Russia would not support a resolution in the UNSC that is not acceptable for Belgrade and Pristina, adding that the threat of veto is meant to stimulate the two sides to look for a mutually acceptable compromise.

¶15. (sbu) Assistant NATO SYG Erdman announced NATO foreign ministers will meet in Oslo on April 27 and give their support for a Kosovo solution at the UNSC as NATO troops will remain in the

BELGRADE 00000569 003 OF 003

province to guarantee peace and implementation of status solution. He added that the NATO foreign ministers would discuss Kosovo in Oslo with Russian FonMin Lavrov at a meeting between NATO's Council of Cooperation with Russia.

¶16. (sbu) FoNet reported April 26 that UK Ambassador Wordsworth told the presidents of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja municipalities, which are predominantly populated by Albanians, that their municipalities are part of Serbia. According to Wordsworth, he has conveyed this clear message because Albanian parties from Southern Serbia have started initiatives to merge with Kosovo if Kosovo gets independence.

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